

THE BAPTIST Record

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Five years after, rebuilding continues

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was the costliest natural disaster, as well as one of the five deadliest hurricanes, in the history of the United States.

After making landfall briefly in Louisiana, the eyewall passed over the cities of Bay St. Louis and Waveland the morning of August 29, as a Category 3 hurricane with sustained winds of 120 mph. The resulting 26-foot storm surge penetrated six miles inland and in many areas moved 12 miles along bays and rivers.

The surge was the most extensive, as well as the highest, in the documented history of the United States. Preliminary estimates by Mississippi officials calculated that 90% of the structures within half a mile of the coastline were completely demolished. On U.S. Highway 90, which runs east to west along the coastline, two major bridges were destroyed.

The effects were felt statewide. Eleven tornadoes were recorded in the state, and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency estimated that over 900,000 people were without power. Total property damage from Katrina was estimated at \$81 billion. In Mississippi alone, the storm left 238 people dead and 67 missing.

Mississippi Baptists responded generously. To date, almost \$21 million has gone toward Katrina-related needs. Among these gifts have been \$11,094,296.48 toward church rebuilds; \$7,308,701.88 toward community rebuilds; \$1,836,941.63 toward salary support (gifts given to pastors and staff to help supplement any shortfalls in salary in the months following the storm); \$265,456.03 toward response to ministers (emergency monies given immediately after the storm, as well as ministers' home repairs); and \$460,693 toward feeding and miscellaneous.

Finances tell only one part of the story. Perhaps the true story of Katrina is found in the individual accounts of people and churches. Consider "A Tale of Two Churches," Woolmarket Church in Biloxi and First Church, Bay St. Louis.

Located well north of the coastline, Woolmarket Church still suffered significant damage from Katrina. Paul Crowley will be celebrating his 15th anniversary as pastor in October.

"We lost some good folks who moved," Crowley said. "This area was still far enough north that most of our damage was wind damage, but some folks didn't want to go through this kind of thing again."

Part of the church building had to be totally gutted. Sanctuary damage was minimal, but part of the education space was ruined because of rain damage. Damages were close to \$300,000.

"We didn't miss a service," said Crowley. "This [the education] building had to be completely redone. The gym was still standing, and we were able to use it. That Wednesday after the storm my oldest son and I came back from Tupelo — we'd been up there during the storm —



NEAR TOTAL DESTRUCTION — At the remains of First Church, Gulfport, Morris H. Chapman (right), president of the SBC Executive Committee, reflects on the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. D. August Boto, SBC Executive Committee general counsel and vice president for convention policy, looks on. (BP photo)

and that night he, I, and two church members stood outside the sanctuary and had church services. It was basically, "Thank you Lord that we are all in one piece!"

The next Sunday the church had an early service. The church's insurance "did right," in Crowley's words. Contributions helped with the deductibles.

The first three years after the storm we housed over 4,000 volunteers who came in. We started with chainsaws. North Highland Church from Hueytown, Alabama, has been down many times, helping us and helping others.

For the first two or three years, it was all about Katrina, all about the recovery. Every conversation with someone would turn to the storm — where they were, what had happened to them. In the last year-and-a-half or two years, Katrina hasn't dominated the conversation, and it's given us a chance to get back to church, to seeking and saving the lost. The focus has shifted back. It's hard for me to go back and compare where we were before Katrina ... It's hard to think about what it was like before August of 2005.

"Katrina changed me," Crowley continued. "It changed all of us. There are people in our church who are different now. Not necessarily good, not necessarily bad. It just impacted us all. Out here, it's easy to forget it happened, but if you drive along the beach, you know things have changed."

Bay St. Louis, in many ways, was "ground zero" for Katrina, but a stroll around the downtown area shows significant rebuilding and restoration has taken place.

Al Green is pastor of First Church in Bay St. Louis. "My daddy had just come through one bout with cancer," said Green, "and was scheduled to go back in the hospital on the day Katrina hit, so I went to his home in Lumberton and planned to stay with him at the hospital. They called

Sunday afternoon and said they weren't letting anyone in the hospital, so I rode it out with him in Lumberton. I followed the chainsaw teams back in Tuesday."

First Church's sanctuary lost its roof, all the windows, and the cinderblock pilings supporting the building were twisted and leaning. The building, which was one of the chapels at the Centreville Army Base, had been purchased in 1947 for a little over \$1,200. The building had been taken apart at the site and brought back to Bay St. Louis, re-assembled, and bricked.

"We had an architect come look under the building, and he told us 'I can't tell you it can't be fixed, but it will cost thousands of dollars for the reports needed to let you know if it could be repaired.' So we voted just to tear it down," said Green. The church has built a new sanctuary, with more building to follow.

"Before the storm we were in two services," Green continued, "so by rebuilding we were able to get in one service. We were averaging about 265-270 in worship before Katrina, and we probably had 230 this past Sunday — but probably only about 150 of that number were attending church before Katrina. We've gotten a lot of new people in, a lot that came in during the disaster rebuild."

When asked about the attitude and bearing of the church members, Green said, "We have a new normal. In a lot of ways, that's better than the old normal. There hasn't been that much of a panic over the oil spill that there might've been prior to Katrina. We've learned that there is truth in the word of God, that prayer can change things."

Green stated, as a testimony to God's faithfulness, that the church was "giving more today than it was before Katrina. We had to borrow money to build the sanctuary, but if it weren't for that, we'd be running ahead of budget."

Judges: Take down Utah memorial crosses

SALT LAKE CITY (BP) — Crosses alongside Utah highways and roads that memorialize fallen state troopers are unconstitutional and must be removed, a federal appeals court ruled August 18 in a case that could end up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously ruled that the crosses, which are 12 feet tall, six feet wide, and have state approval, amount to an unconstitutional government establishment of religion. Each cross has the trooper's name, rank, and badge number along with the year he or she died, biographical information, and a picture. It also has the Utah Highway Patrol official symbol.

The program, started in 1998, places the cross as near as possible to the death site.

The organization American Atheists filed the suit, with one of the plaintiffs even saying he occasionally altered his travel route to avoid seeing a cross. Supporters of the crosses say they will appeal the decision, either to the full Tenth Circuit or to the Supreme Court.

The crosses themselves are privately funded, although most of them are on public land. There are more than a dozen of them statewide.

"[W]e conclude that the cross memorials would convey to a reasonable observer that the state of Utah is endorsing Christianity," the court ruled in a 35-page decision that reversed a lower court. "The memorials use the preeminent symbol of Christianity, and they do so standing alone (as opposed to it being part of some sort of display involving other symbols). That cross conspicuously bears the imprimatur of a state entity, the

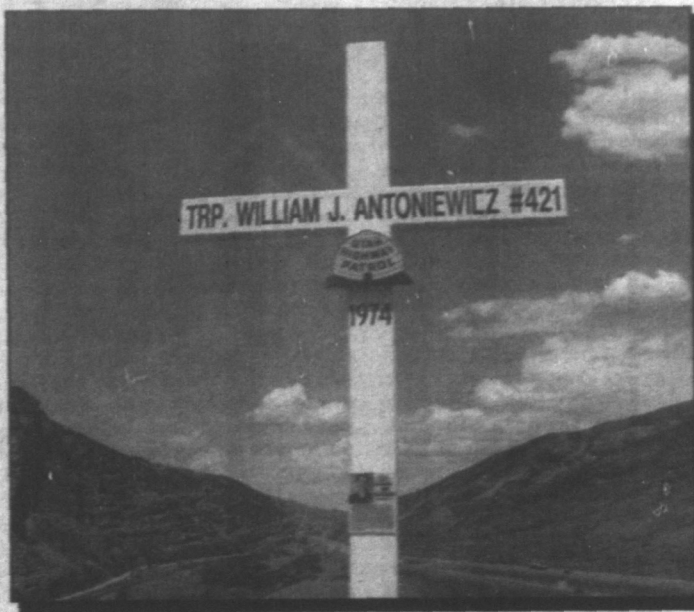
[Utah Highway Patrol], and is found primarily on public land."

Although the Tenth Circuit cited Supreme Court precedent, supporters of the crosses say the high court already addressed the issue in a recent opinion. In an April decision in which the Supreme Court allowed a cross to remain in the Mojave Desert, Justice Anthony Kennedy, writing for a 5-4 majority, asserted that the "goal of avoiding governmental endorsement does not require eradication of all religious symbols in the public realm."

"A cross by the side of a public highway marking, for instance, the place where a state trooper perished need not be taken as a statement of governmental support for sectarian beliefs," Kennedy wrote in the case, *Salazar v. Buono*. "The Constitution does not oblige government to avoid any public acknowledgment of religion's role in society."

The Tenth Circuit panel acknowledged the *Salazar* decision but said the Supreme Court "did not address the merits of the Establishment Clause claim" against the Mojave Desert cross. In that case the Supreme Court did not get to the Establishment Clause question but instead returned the case to the lower court with instructions for further consideration.

Legal groups who support the Utah crosses expressed optimism. "One atheist group's agenda shouldn't diminish the sacrifice made by Utah highway patrol officers and their families. The families of the fallen should be allowed to honor their loved ones as they wish," said Byron Babione, an attorney with the Alliance Defense Fund, which was allowed to intervene in the case.



IMPERMISSIBLE — A federal three-judge panel has ruled that roadside memorials to Utah state troopers who died in the line of duty must be removed as impermissible because the crosses on which the memorials are based can be construed as an endorsement of Christianity by the government. Groups in favor of the private memorials, which stand on public land, have vowed to appeal. (BP photo)

"Individualized memorial crosses honoring fallen troopers simply do not amount to a government establishment of religion. And the mention of the validity of roadside crosses by the Supreme Court in a recent decision is certainly an encouraging sign for our case on appeal," Babione said.

Conservative groups are hopeful the Supreme Court eventually will establish new precedent on such church-state cases. The Supreme Court's last major similar decision came in 2005 when it issued split decisions in a pair of Ten Commandments cases, allowing a Texas monument to stand while ordering one in Kentucky to be removed.

Both rulings were 5-4, with Justice Stephen Breyer — a member of the liberal bloc — the only justice to switch sides.

Since then, the makeup of the court has changed significantly and grown more conservative. Specifically, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor — a moderate who voted in both cases to remove the Ten Commandments — was

replaced with a conservative, Samuel Alito.

In the Utah case the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of itself and the states of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma, asking that the crosses be allowed to remain.

"The Constitution does not require stripping government property of all religious symbols — especially when those symbols are privately owned, privately funded, and privately maintained," said Luke Goodrich of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. "When the government allows private speech on public property, it cannot discriminate between secular and religious speech and muzzle only the religious."

The appeals panel was made up of two nominees of President Reagan (Deanell Reece Tacha and David M. Ebel) and one nominee of President George W. Bush (Harris L. Hartz).

The Tenth Circuit covers Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming.

Adult cells work

WASHINGTON (BP) — University of Minnesota researchers have used non-embryonic stem cells to treat successfully children with a lethal skin disease. Another team of researchers, meanwhile, reported Aug. 16 they had used a different form of non-embryonic stem cells to provide therapies for laboratory rats with Parkinson's Disease. Using adult stem cells from donor bone marrow or donor umbilical cord blood, the Minnesota scientists treated children with recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa (RDEB), a severe form of epidermolysis bullosa (EB). EB also affects the lining of the mouth and esophagus and causes skin to blister, which can lead to infections and a virulent form of skin cancer. The disease has been regarded as incurable. Most children with EB do not survive their 20s. The research team, led by John Wagner and Jakub Tolar, has transplanted adult stem cells into 10 children since 2007. The recipients have responded to a variety of degrees, Wagner said. "This discovery is more unique and more remarkable than it may first sound," Tolar said. "... What we have found is that stem cells contained in bone marrow can travel to sites of injured skin, leading to increased production of collagen which is deficient in patients with RDEB. Bone marrow transplantation is one of the riskiest procedures in medicine, yet it is also one of the most successful. Patients who otherwise would have died from their disease can often now be cured. It's a serious treatment for a serious disease." The extraction of embryonic stem cells requires the destruction of the tiny human embryos from which they are taken. Extracting non-embryonic stem cells does not harm the donor.

Looking back

10 years ago

The Youth Ministry Team of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board has developed and printed 8,000 bookcovers displaying the 10 Commandments and evangelism helps, for students to place on their textbooks at school.

20 years ago

U.S. Air Force Major Gerald Knighton, former pastor of Fayette Church, Fayette, will leave his position as chaplain of Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va. Knighton has provided a Christian witness to more than 700 families who came to bury loved ones in the cemetery.

50 years ago

Lawrence T. Lowery, recently retired as president of Blue Mountain College, is in King's Daughters' hospital in Brookhaven as a result of an automobile accident. He suffered a broken collarbone, a broken rib, a fractured knee, and several cuts and bruises.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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No. 33



YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



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Our Defining Time

In many ways, it seems like a lifetime ago. In other ways, it seems like yesterday. There are many aspects we'll always remember. There are many aspects we wish we could forget.

When Hurricane Katrina roared ashore five years ago this coming Sunday, it was like nothing we had seen in Mississippi since Hurricane Camille in 1969. For those of us who witnessed the fury of Camille, we were certain there would never be another storm like her in our lifetimes. We were wrong. Katrina taught us lightning can strike twice in the same place.

Do you remember where you were on that fateful evening? I was covering a story at a church in north Mississippi that afternoon, and planned to spend the night there before heading home early the next morning. My wife called on my cell phone around dusk and said, "I think you better come home." I did.

Watching Katrina pass over our home in Ridgeland with still-powerful winds and blinding rain was a sight (and sounds) I will likely remember forever, a bigger-

than-life story I will tell my grandchildren and, hopefully, my great-grandchildren.

The title of the lead editorial in the next issue of The Baptist Record after the storm passed was entitled, *Our Defining Time*. "There will be storm victims — refugees, if you will — in need of our help for many years to come," I wrote in that editorial. "How Christians react to this historic challenge will define us in the eyes of the world for decades to come. More to the point, how Baptists react to this historic challenge will define us in the eyes of the world for decades to come."

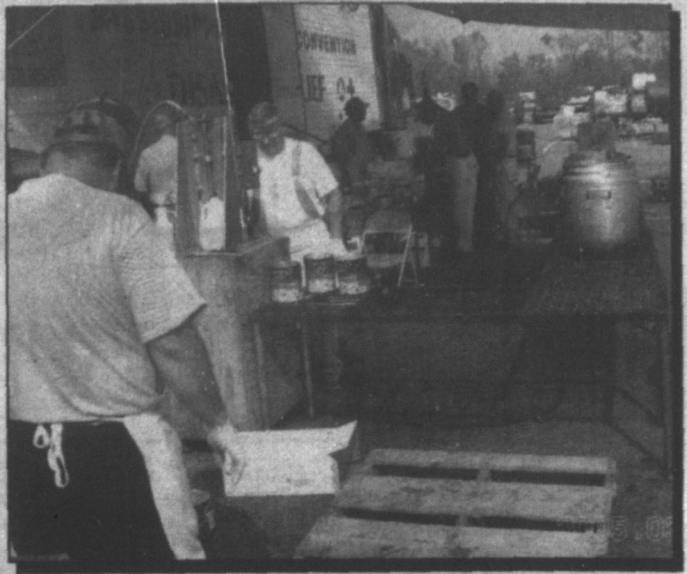
Five years after those words were inked on to newsprint, we have our answer. Baptists poured into the Gulf Coast regions

of Mississippi and Louisiana by the thousands. They came from north Mississippi, Alaska, Hawaii, and all points in between. To name all of them and all of the organizations that mobilized to help us in our hour of need would take all the pages of all the issues of The Baptist Record through the end of the year. It was amazing.

Millions of meals were served to hungry residents of the storm area, thanks to Baptist volunteers. Thousands of people with medical needs were attended. Churches were rebuilt. Homes were cleaned out, refurbished, and even rebuilt if necessary. Volunteers rotated in and out of the Gulf Coast area for years.

The world took note. An uncountable number of lost people, stunned by the generosity of Baptists in their hour of need, came to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. That's what Christian service does for non-believers. An equally uncountable number of the volunteers who came were changed for the rest of their lives. That's what Christian service does for believers.

All of the memories are now five years in the past. The news media's attention has been directed elsewhere, to the next big story and the one after that and the one after that one. There have been major disasters that have drawn volunteers and resources to other places.



FEEDING THE HUNGRY — Mississippi Baptist volunteers prepare meals in September 2005 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Volunteers were responsible for the millions of meals that provided a witness to Gulf Coast residents left destitute by the monstrous storm. (Photo courtesy of Men's Ministry Dept., MBCB)

Anyone who has been to the Mississippi Gulf Coast lately knows much has been done, and much remains to be done before we can confidently declare ourselves recovered.

Mississippi Baptists are not finished. The main task remains to be completed, and that is to continue to provide the witness that will help bring everyone along the coast (and around the world) to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

If anyone can do it, Mississippi Baptists can. After what Jesus did for us, how can we do any less?

GUEST OPINION: *How was India?*

Name Withheld

So how was India? I couldn't even think of where I would begin. I never imagined I would go to India. I know that some people knew from age five they were going to serve the Lord overseas, but that wasn't me.

A month before I graduated from college, I fully planned to stay in America and pursue some sort of career in politics, but there came a moment when I distinctly felt I was fighting against the strong current of God's purpose, afraid to embrace what He made me to do.

One night, with no job prospects, no purpose, and no sanity left, I threw up my hands to the God of the universe and said, "Whatever You made me to do, I'll do it! Just get me over my fears."

That was the first step to India. The second week there, I wanted to go home. There was a general stress that weighed heavily upon me, which I couldn't trace to one particular thing. I later defined it as the stress of living in a place foreign from everything I had ever known.

There was also some demonic oppression where I lived, since the neighbors were devout Hindus and reg-

ularly worshipped idols. All this made me feel like there was no way I could survive. I distinctly remember looking at my calendar and thinking, "I have four months here? I'm going to die! I will perish here in India from stress."

I didn't die. I fell on the Lord. I told Him frequently there was no way I could survive without Him, and I asked Him to be my strength through each day. I knew He brought me to India for a purpose, and I prayed more times than I can remember that He would accomplish that purpose in me, no matter my flaws or apprehensions.

Slowly, I got used to living in India, and as that happened, I began to see. The first time I went into a slum, I couldn't take it all in. I witnessed the most desperate poverty of people who could

not afford to eat every day, who lived in filthy one-room houses with seven people and no hope, where drunken men beat their wives senseless and women murdered their newborn baby girls because they couldn't take care of them.

I saw ornately carved temples filled with powerless idols, where scores of people in bondage to spiritual darkness burned incense to demons. I saw the minarets of mosques and heard the echoes of innumerable calls to prayer, beckoning men and women to bow before a twisted idea of God proclaimed by a false prophet.

I also saw passionate believers in Christ who devoted their lives to loving the children who live in the slums. Every day they fed these children, helped them with homework, taught them

about Jesus, and showed them that the true God who created them loves them deeply.

I saw thousands of Christians in church on Sundays praying with sincere hearts to their Savior, lifting up their hands to worship the living God who has been in India since time began.

How could I describe what all this has done to me? In a slow succession of events, my time in India altered the very fiber of my being. I am not and never will be the same person. I have seen, heard, and done things I never imagined. I have been broken to the most utter point of despair and seen the Lord work mightily through my weakness. I have breathed deeply of all that He is and have lived by His strength in the most difficult of circumstances.

I have followed Him to a place I never thought I would go and been changed in ways I still don't understand. I am at a loss for words.

That's how India was.

Author's name withheld for security reasons. This commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Democrats attempt to muzzle crisis pregnancy centers

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville has called on congressional leaders to proceed no further on legislation to regulate advertising by pregnancy help centers.

In an Aug. 19 letter, ERLC President Richard Land wrote the leading members of two committees to express opposition to the Stop Deceptive Advertising for Women's Services Act. The bill would direct the Federal Trade

Commission to issue new rules banning advertising that intends to give the impression a center provides abortions when it does not.

The ERLC opposes the legislation because "its purpose is to restrict the speech and activities of pregnancy centers throughout the country, opening the door for increased abortions," Land wrote.

"Crisis pregnancy centers have an impact on reducing abortions, as they inform women that there is an abortion alternative," he said. "It is therefore vital that we protect, not inhibit, the speech of these life-affirming pregnancy centers that do not perform or refer for abortions."

Land expressed a concern pro-life advocates have that the bill would require pregnancy centers to advertise they do not provide abortions. "We do not know of any business that is required to advertise the services it does not provide," he said. "Why should crisis pregnancy centers be required to do so?"

Land's letter went to Sens. John Rockefeller, D.-W.Va., and Kay Bailey Hutchison, R.-Texas, the chairman and ranking member, respectively, of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. It also was sent to Reps. Henry Waxman, D.-Cal., and Joe

Barton, R.-Texas, the chairman and ranking member, respectively, of the House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee.

The bill is H.R. 5652 in the House, and its companion in the Senate is S. 3554. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D.-N.Y., is the proposal's sponsor in the House. Sen. Robert Menendez, D.-N.J., is the sponsor in the Senate.

In introducing her bill June 30, Maloney said many pregnancy centers are "forthright and respectful" but asserted "some take a more underhanded approach to lure in women seeking abortions by using tactics that should be illegal."

NARAL Pro-choice America, a leading abortion rights organization, has been spearheading the charge against pro-life pregnancy centers. It has accused them of deceptively advertising in online yellow page directories under such headings as "abortion services."

Care Net President Melinda Delahoyde denied the charge when the bills were introduced. Affiliates with her pro-life organization and other national groups, such as Heartbeat International and the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates, abide by a document — titled Commitment of Care and Competence — in which they promise to advertise and communicate truthfully, she said.

"Deception is simply inconsistent with our Christian principles of honesty and integrity," said Delahoyde, whose organization describes itself as "Christ-centered" and serves more than 1,100 pregnancy centers.

The Maloney and Menendez bills are "just another attempt to shut down the competition," she said in a written release.

The legislation, which has been introduced in previous sessions of Congress, has not been greeted with a groundswell of support. It has 25 co-sponsors in the House and none in the Senate.

Its introduction, however, again provides evidence of a tactic being used by abortion rights advocates and their allies at various government levels.

In the last year, the city councils of both Austin, Texas, and Baltimore, Md., have adopted ordinances requiring pregnancy help centers to display signs saying they do not perform or refer for abortions. Enforcement of the Baltimore measure has been put on hold while a lawsuit by organizations representing pregnancy centers is considered in federal court. A judge heard oral arguments in the case Aug. 4.

Many pro-life pregnancy help centers provide such free services as pregnancy tests, ultrasound exams, prenatal care, childbirth classes, testing

for sexually transmitted diseases, abstinence education, post-abortion counseling, and material assistance. Abortion clinics typically do not provide some of these services.

In his letter, Land pointed to an "irony" in the Maloney and Menendez proposals.

The ERLC finds "it ironic that [the legislation] targets crisis pregnancy centers for supposed deception in advertising while some affiliates of Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, are under investigation for such practices as offering inaccurate information on unborn child development and advising minors on how to avoid state parental notification laws," he said.

Hidden-camera investigations by Live Action, a student-led, pro-life group, have caught Planned Parenthood employees in Alabama, Arizona, California, Indiana, Tennessee and Wisconsin seeking either to cover up alleged child sexual abuse or providing erroneous information about fetal development.

Land told the members of Congress the Southern Baptist Convention has approved more than 10 resolutions opposing abortion at its annual meetings since 1980. In some of those resolutions, support was expressed for pregnancy centers and counselors.

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1. Main St. Church, Goodman



2. Mt. Vernon Church, Newton



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1. Main St. Church, Goodman: July, with \$429 raised for the Baptist Children's Village. Shown are the participants.
2. Mt. Vernon Church, Newton: July 12 - 16; high attendance, 101; five professions of faith; offering of \$425 sent to missionary Juanita West. Shown are the participants.
3. Parkway Church, Pascagoula: July 26 - 30; average attendance, 42. Shown are the participants.
4. Christ Community Church, Grenada: July 26 - 30; the children brought canned goods for the local food pantry and collected \$300 for IMB missionaries Burt and Suzanne Schmitz. Shown are the participants.



3. Parkway Church, Pascagoula



4. Christ Community Church, Grenada

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TCW EVTE VX ZF T OXK-
TOWXO IY EVXB EVTE
WZARXCEAM FXXQ VZB.

VXUOXKF XAXJXC: FZL

Clue: U = B

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts One: Seven.

The other day I was riding along listening to some music on a Christian radio station. In between some of the songs, some guy came on that I did not know. He said, "Just remember, blessed are the flexible for they shall never get bent out of shape." When he said it, I was blessed immediately, but then two thoughts came to my mind almost simultaneously. The first was, well, that is not a verse in the Bible, and the second was, I know a lot of us who need to hear that.

The problem with my initial two thoughts is that one of them is incorrect. The first thought is untrue. In fact, you can find the truth of that statement in a number of places and you can see it lived out in many other places. For instance, just think about that section of Scripture where the Spirit of God is supposed to be working in the believer and producing fruit. Paul states it like this, "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, temperance, faith" (Gal. 5:22). Many of these fruit components are part of the fabric of life that provides flexibility in our relationships. Listen to the Apostle Paul as he writes in Ephesians 4:32, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ sake has forgiven you."

What a word for all of us to have — some flexibility, grace, and lubrication in the abrasive parts of our lives and relationships. It will make a tremendous difference wherever we may find ourselves: home, school, church, business, everywhere. Why should we be flexible with other folks? Let me just give you three quick thoughts.

One — God has been flexible with us. God does not overlook our sins, but He has a way of dealing with our sins. In the midst of all of that, He shows us enormous amounts of grace. He does not have to put up with us. He did not



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

even have to provide a way for sin to be paid for and victory to become ours. He is not required to respond to our arrogance and rebellion with love and kindness, but He does. How thankful we should be.

Secondly — We ought to be flexible because there are unknown, unspoken, and unseen issues going on in people's lives. If we knew, we definitely would be more flexible and understanding. You hear a good deal about road rage when people out on the highways just go bonkers, but have you ever stopped to think about the fact that you probably know nothing/zilch/zero about what is going on in the lives of people driving the cars around you? I have often thought if we could have a little system, maybe a sign on our car where you could type in just a brief statement about what is going on with you, that people would be more understanding.

What if, as you drove down the road, the people who pull in front of you, drive too fast or too slow, or whatever their irritating driving habit, had a little sticker on their car with an emotional synopsis that you could read? It might read something like this: "I have five children. Three of them are sick and I am on the way to the doctor." Or maybe it would say, "I am on the way home from the doctor's office and I just received word of the recurrence of cancer." What if you passed a car and the

sign read, "I just got fired from my job," or "I received orders today that I will be leaving for Afghanistan," or "My husband (or wife) just told me that he or she wants a divorce," or "I got a letter from the IRS today," or "I discovered my child is on drugs," or "I just received word at work that my house is on fire."

These statements would reveal to us that maybe we should be a little bit more understanding and maybe a little more flexible. The only problem with my system is that no doubt there would be many more wrecks on the

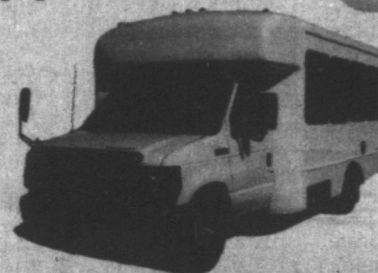
road because everyone would be trying to read what was going on with the folks around them. The problem is whether you are at work, church, play, or in the store, you can never fully know what is going on with the folks around you, so even though you do not know — because if you did know, you would do differently — just do differently anyway. Give them some space, cut them slack, and show them some grace.

A third reason we ought to be flexible is simply that we constantly want flexibility shown to us. Of course, I know and you know that you probably deserve it. I hope that everybody you have dealings with will be a reader of this article and follow the guidelines because I want it to make a difference for you.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



11. McCain ordination

11. **Harrisburg Church, Tupelo**, ordained Blake McCain to the gospel ministry Aug. 8. Shown are Blue Logan, pastor Forrest Sheffield, McCain, Tim Roberts, and Ed Page.

12. **Moselle Memorial Church, Moselle**, held a thank-you luncheon for the teachers and staff members of Moselle Elementary School Aug. 5, with over 70 attending. Shown are some of the participants.



12. Moselle Memorial Church, Moselle

REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. **Oak Grove Church, Yazoo County**: Revival, Sept. 12-15; Sun., Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship 10 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon service; Mon. - Wed., 7:30 p.m.; Malcolm Pinion, speaker; Gowan Ellis, interim pastor.

2. **Harmony Church, Brookhaven**: Revival, Aug. 29-Sept. 1; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Gene Douglas, speaker; Jerry Peagler, music; Owen King, pastor.

3. **Siloam Church, Magee**: Homecoming, Aug. 29; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; Raymond Jeffcoat, speaker; Nolan Bishop and family, music.

4. **Moak's Creek Church, Summit**: Homecoming, Sept. 5; Sunday School, high attendance day; worship, 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch and afternoon service; Lincoln Chorale Men's Group, music; Mike Alexander, pastor.

5. **Vardaman Church, Kemper County**: Homecoming, Sept. 5; worship, 10:30 a.m., fol-

lowed by covered dish meal; Richie Davis, speaker; Brandon Jones, music; Dennis Robinson, pastor.

6. **Community Church, Columbus**: 30th anniversary, Sept. 12, 10 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; former pastors attending; Wes Jones, pastor.

7. **McBee Church, Columbus**: Homecoming, Aug. 29; Sunday School, 9:30; worship, 10:30, followed by covered dish lunch and singing; Heartmen, music.

8. **Pine Hill Church, Enterprise**: Homecoming, Aug. 29; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner in fellowship hall; Claude Killian, speaker; Danny Bullock, pastor.

9. **Sylvarena Church, Wesson**: Homecoming, Sept. 12; covered dish luncheon after morning worship service; Mark Dearman, speaker; Marty Stephens, music; Stuart Givens, pastor.

STAFF CHANGES

1. **Jackie Spell** has entered the field of full-time evangelism and is available for revivals. He may be reached at (601) 408-2254 or at brojps@att.net.

2. **First Church, Benndale**, has called Ray Hatcock as pastor. He has pastored churches in Green County and George County, Mississippi. He is shown with his wife, Sarah.



2. The Hatcocks

COLLEGE NEWS

1. The **William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine** inaugural class are shown listening intently as the faculty and staff introduce themselves and welcome the students.

2. About 45 people attended the **Mississippi College Summer Conference** for senior pastors from metro Jackson churches August 9. Shown are Ronnie Falvey, pastor of First Church, Madison, and Robert Washington, pastor, New Beginnings Church, Jackson.

3. **Mississippi College** welcomed its Accelerated Degree Program students to the Flowood Center recently, with classes beginning Aug. 23. A ribbon cutting and open house was held Aug. 16.

4. **U.S. News and World Report** ranked **Mississippi College** number 9 in the "Best Colleges, Best Value" category among the South's regional universities. This represents an improvement from 11th place in the category a year ago.



1. WCU College of Osteopathic Medicine



2. Falvey and Washington

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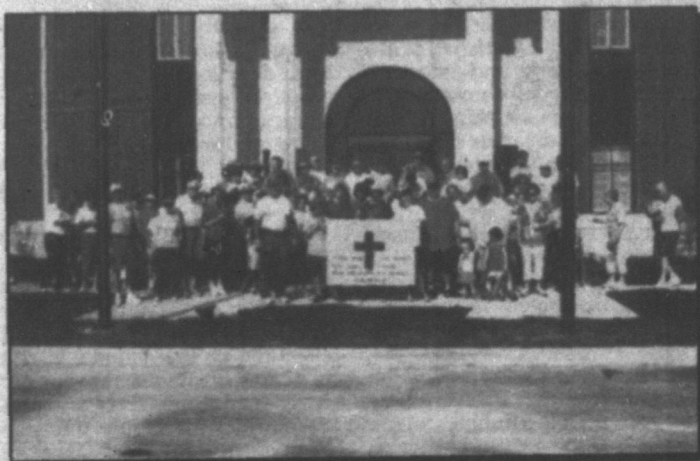
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JUST FOR THE RECORD



3. Fellowship Church, Hernando



4. Rocky Point Church, Leake Assn.



5. First Church, Columbus



6. First Church, Vicksburg

1. Carrollton Church, Carrollton is hosting a women's conference Sept. 11, 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Cost, \$15, including lunch and light breakfast. Keith Carpenter, speaker; with Bean Ferry Pottery, Fulton. Call (662) 392-0218 or 299-3358 for more information.

2. Gracewood Church, Southaven, will host Christian humorist Billy Bob Bohannon Sept. 19, 6 p.m. Barry Baker, pastor.

3. Fellowship Church, Hernando, held a prayer walk from their existing property to their new facility Aug. 14. The church will begin services in the new facility Sept. 5. James Spencer, pastor. Shown are the participants.

4. The GAs of Rocky Point Church, Leake Association, were recognized for their accomplishments for the year. Shown are the participants.

5. The Women on Mission of First Church, Columbus, supplied 600 packages of baby wipes to U.S. Marines in Afghanistan in cooperation with Operation Ukraine. Shown are Trixie Novak, Helen McCarty, and pastor Shawn Parker.

6. First Church, Vicksburg, sent a team of 28 to do some light construction work at Blue Mountain College the last week of July. Shown are Buck Taylor, Gerry Gore, Bruce Wilkes, Tyler Gore, and James Poe (on ladder).

7. Gerald Crenshaw, a member of Mt. Carmel Church, Philadelphia, is shown delivering a load of food to the Neshoba County Association office. An average of 38 families attend a chapel service every Thursday before the food is distributed. Glen Jackson, AMD.

8. Silver Creek Church, Pike Association, ordained Harris Thornton as deacon Aug. 15. Shown are pastor Jimmy Smith, Thornton, and his wife, Cindy.

9. Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie, recognizes its high school Bible drillers. Shown are the participants.

10. New Home Church, Fulton, held a baby dedication for deacon Clay Knight. Shown are Kelly Wayne Knight, Knight, Stacy Knight, and pastor Michael Warren.



7. Crenshaw



8. Thornton ordination



9. Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie



10. Knight dedication

NAMB missionaries gather in Chicago for training

CHICAGO (BP) — "Our church plant is in the middle of one of the most dangerous areas of our city," said John Smith, a church planting missionary in Pontiac, Mi.

Less than 25 miles from Detroit, Pontiac is a mini-version of the city that often ranks as one of the top five most dangerous cities in the U.S. "We minister to people who are homeless, involved in prostitution, and addicted to drugs, but our greatest area of ministry is to the city's teen population," Smith said.

Smith and his wife Kia are not strangers to the challenges of growing up in the inner city. Both grew up in Pontiac. "Our mission field is right at home," said Smith, who planted Shepherd's Fold Baptist Church in the high school he attended as a teenager.

"The teens we work with long for community and the relationships of a family unit," Smith said. "Unfortunately, many of them find that sense of community in gangs. We're trying to help them understand the value of the body of Christ as community."

The Smiths were among 138 missionaries who attended a North American Mission Board (NAMB) Missionary Connection event in Chicago, Ill., on Aug. 12-14, for training, encouragement, and spiritual rejuvenation.

"I can't leave here and be the same," said Smith, speaking of the impact the connection event had made in his life. "I'm looking forward to getting back home and putting the spiritual jumper cables on our church."

NAMB Interim President Richard Harris led NAMB staff members in providing encouragement, training, and networking. The two-day event was filled with workshops on evangelism, mobilization, leadership, apologetics, money management, and prayer.

Those who attended the event serve in central Canada and mid-west and western states including Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Montana, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Missionaries representing a wide range of ministries were able to connect with one another, tell stories of personal challenges and triumphs, and share ideas for reaching particular people groups and affinity groups.

Jeremy Pape, a collegiate missionary at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, compared notes with Smith. "Our challenge is reaching students who are on track to fulfilling the American dream," Pape said. "They have no need for God and their future looks bright."

That's in sharp contrast to the students in Pontiac who have no aspirations for college and are just trying to stay alive. "Our students are just trying to stay alive and stay out of jail. They aren't thinking past the age of 21," Smith said. "Our students know they need God; they just aren't willing to yield their lives to Him."

No matter the ministry, there was a shared sense of urgency to reach a changing culture and a mission field that grows further from God with each passing gen-

eration. NAMB missionaries found common ground in trying to sustain ministry with fewer resources and with an uncertain future.

In a scheduled listening session to field questions about the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force recommendations, Harris reminded the missionaries that transition is never easy.

"We are going to move ahead aggressively toward implementing the GCR recommendations," Harris said. "Our top priorities will be evangelism and discipleship, church planting and mobilizing a missional movement."

Harris stated that in order to reach the 258 million people in North America who don't have a relationship with Christ, the Southern Baptist Convention, NAMB, state conventions, associations, and local churches have to change the way they do some things.

"Look at what's happening in our culture," Harris said. "Much of that can be laid at the feet of God's people because we aren't doing what we've been called to do."

A missionary from Ohio asked what type of measurements would be used to evaluate success under the new priorities.

"We have to have new measures of success," Harris said. "Numbers do not tell all of the story, but they do tell a large part



TALKING STRATEGY — Richard Harris (right), NAMB's interim president talks with missionaries serving in the midwestern states at a missionary connection event held in Chicago. (BP photo)

of the story. We want to move from just measuring activity to measuring outcome. "We don't just want new churches; we want healthy, reproducing churches."

A missionary from Michigan asked Harris to explain how NAMB would work in states without cooperative agreements that are to be phased out over seven years.

"We cannot move forward without some kind of partnership agreement, covenant or some understanding of how we can accomplish the work together in a particular state," Harris said.

Speaking of the GCR directive to impact lostness in North America's large popula-

tion centers, Harris said that NAMB would continue to work with the state convention to reach those metro areas.

"Working with Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, that is bigger than NAMB," said Harris. "I don't think NAMB could ever have enough dollars to employ enough people to impact large cities. We will need partners from all across the convention to reach our cities."

Harris went on to remind those concerned about the future that God's grace is sufficient to supply all their needs. "We will get through this. What God originates, He orchestrates," Harris said.

Albuquerque church fire ruled arson

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP) — A fire that heavily damaged the historic downtown building of First Church in Albuquerque, N.M., on Aug. 18 has been ruled an arson, according to the local fire department.

Reports indicate the fire caused an estimated \$250,000 in damage after it was set in the parlor and spread upstairs to the library.

Firefighters responded to the blaze around 11 p.m. (MDT) and worked for two hours to contain the fire to the first three stories of the five-story building. More than 70 firefighters were involved in the effort, according to the Albuquerque Journal, which described the church as an iconic downtown landmark.

First Church Albuquerque's 700-member congregation recently moved its Sunday services to a new building on the west side of town, but the church offices

and other ministries remained at the downtown building.

Albuquerque Public Schools was close to purchasing the 61-year-old structure for use as a fine arts magnet school for kindergarten through eighth grade, and the school system's chief operating officer said after the fire that the school system is still "very interested in the property."

"We knew we could start a small magnet school here without much work," Brad Winter of Albuquerque Public Schools told the Journal. "Depending on insurance issues, that could still be the case."

The building was insured, church officials said, but the church was waiting for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, which is required to investigate any fire that damages a church, to complete its work. As of Friday, there were no suspects in the arson case.

In addition to the school system, the city of Albuquerque was interested in purchasing the First Church complex. "The city has been looking at this property for several years, and I think that it would be the ideal location for an event center," City Council president Ken Sanchez said.

Both Albuquerque Public Schools and the city council said the property is a gold mine, according to Albuquerque's KOAT-TV. The school board recently approved \$11.3 million to buy the church campus and had been waiting on a due diligence report to be sure inspections of the building were satisfactory.

Kosciusko native Morris H. Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, and Hayes Wicker, pastor of First Church in Naples, Fla., are among the church's former pastors.

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Expert: same sex marriage polls highly inaccurate

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A leading pollster whose company favors liberal causes says most polls on same sex marriage can't be trusted because Americans, not wanting to be labeled intolerant, are hesitant to state their position on the issue to a live interviewer.

Tom Jensen, director of the North Carolina-based Public Policy Polling, says automated polls — that is, polls in which a person does not talk to someone but instead can press buttons on a phone keypad — are more reliable. His company uses automated polling.

Public Policy Polling's latest poll, released Aug. 13, shows Americans opposing same sex marriage by a margin of 57-33%. That poll conflicts with a new CNN poll that used live callers and showed a slight majority of adults thinking there is a constitutional right to same sex marriage.

Both polls were conducted after a federal judge struck down California's constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

Polls released by Gallup, CNN, The

New York Times and all the major news networks use live callers. Only a handful of major polling companies use automated polling, among them Rasmussen Reports and SurveyUSA.

Public Policy Polling was the only company last year that correctly predicted Maine citizens would vote to overturn a same sex marriage law.

"[People are] more likely to tell their true feelings on an automated poll where there's no social anxiety concern than to a live interviewer who they may be worried about the reaction of," Jensen, who supports same sex marriage, wrote on the Public Policy Polling blog. "It is frankly impossible, based on the results of gay marriage referendums over the last decade, to believe that a majority of Americans support its legalization. Dark blue states like California and Maine voted against it just in the last two years."

The Public Policy Polling poll asked 606 registered voters, "Do you think same-sex marriage should be legal or illegal?" The CNN poll asked 496 adults, "Do you think

gays and lesbians should have a constitutional right to get married and have their marriage recognized by law as valid?" Fifty-two percent said yes and 46% said no. The CNN poll was hailed by same sex marriage supporters as the first-ever national survey to support their cause.

Statewide ballot initiatives, Jensen said, are a far better predictor of the nation's feelings on the issue. Same sex marriage has lost in all 31 states where it has been placed on the ballot. Conservatives long have complained that polling on same sex marriage underreported their side's views.

"Obama states like Wisconsin and Virginia rejected it by 14- and 18-point margins in 2006 and red states like South Carolina and Tennessee did so by 56- and 62-point margins," Jensen wrote. "The actual votes we have had on same sex marriage in many states across the country are a more dependable barometer of opinion on the issue than any polling and they tell the story of an American public still pretty opposed to it."

Last year the final poll by Public Policy Polling showed Maine Question 1 winning, 51-47%. The final margin was 53-47%. Question 1 overturned a state law that had legalized same sex marriage.

The final poll by every other polling organization had it losing, with one poll showing it behind by 11 points. A similar pattern was seen in California in 2008 on Proposition 8, with automated polls coming closer to predicting the final outcome. A Public Policy Institute of California poll from October 2008 that used live callers showed Prop 8 losing, 52-44%. It passed, 52-44%.

According to the latest survey, Republicans oppose same sex marriage, 81-12%, as do independents, 48-41%. Democrats favor it 47-40%. Every age group also opposed it, including those under 30, 52-44%.

The latest poll, though, did have some bad news for conservatives: 53% of Americans believe same sex marriage will be legal in 20 years.

Another prescription abortion drug approved by federal government

WASHINGTON (BP) — The federal government has approved for sale another pill as an emergency contraceptive, but critics say it actually is an abortion drug.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced Aug. 13 the approval of "ella," which it says prevents pregnancy when it is taken within five days after sexual intercourse. The drug, which requires a prescription, functions primarily to restrict or postpone ovulation in a woman, according to the FDA.

Pro-life organizations, however, charge ella can act to eliminate an embryo already implant-

ed in the mother's womb. The newly-approved drug is more closely related to RU 486, the abortion drug already sold in the United States, than to currently-marketed emergency contraceptives Plan B and Next Choice, pro-lifers say.

Ella is like RU 486, also known as mifepristone, in that it prevents production of the hormone progesterone, destroying the placenta that provides nutrition to the embryo and causing the tiny child's death, according to the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG).

Like the "morning-after" pills Plan B and Next Choice,

ella also can block implantation of an embryo in the uterine wall, causing an abortion.

AAPLOG and other pro-life organizations expressed concern that women who already are pregnant could destroy early-stage babies in their wombs by taking ella. They also said some women are likely to ignore the product label and take ella more than five days after intercourse, threatening newly implanted embryos.

"It is clearly and unmistakably an abortifacient and is intended as such. The only supposed advantage is that the mother does not know for certain that she is killing her unborn baby because she does not know if she is pregnant," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "This is one more tragic step away from the culture of life on which our nation was founded."

A congressional pro-life advocate, Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., said, "At a minimum [ella] should be classified as an abortion drug. Women deserve to know that these pills they believe prevent pregnancy could actual-

ly kill their unborn child by withholding vital nutrients and effectively starving the child to death."

He also said the FDA's classification of ella as an emergency contraceptive may permit federal funding of abortion through such programs as Medicaid and could require insurance coverage under the new health-care law. Smith urged President Obama to issue an executive order barring funds for ella or insurance coverage that includes ella.

Pro-lifers charged the clinical trials performed with ella were inadequate and voiced concerns about its effect on the health of women who take it and unborn children who survive its use.

The FDA said clinical trials in the United States and England showed the pill to be safe and effective. It said ella is not to be used routinely as a contraceptive.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the country's leading abortion provider, commended the FDA's decision. "Ella will become an important option for women," said Vanessa Cullins, the organization's vice president for medical affairs.

Some pro-life leaders charged approval of ella was more about the political bent of the White House than public health.

"By approving this drug quietly on a Friday afternoon when most of Washington was on vacation, the Obama Administration and the FDA once again placed politics above science, women's health and informed consent," said Jeanne Monahan, director of the Center for Human Dignity at the Family Research Council.

An FDA Advisory Committee for Reproductive Health Drugs unanimously agreed in June the application for ella provided sufficient evidence for approval as an emergency contraceptive.

The same drug has been on sale in Europe under the name ellaOne for the last 15 months.

RU 486, which was approved by the FDA in 2000, is used as the first part of a process normally occurring in the first seven weeks of pregnancy. After RU 486 causes the death of the tiny child, a second drug, misoprostol, is taken two days later, causing the uterus to contract and to expel the baby.

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Dagestan pastor murdered in church

The founding pastor of Dagestan's largest Protestant church was murdered by unidentified gunmen on July 15 while leaving his church building.

The murder of Artur Suleimanov, 49, pastor of 1,000-member Hosanna Christian Church in Makhachkala, the capital of the Russian republic, came after local media broadcast calls for people to take measures against Suleimanov because he was too "active" and led ethnic Muslims to Christ, the Compass Direct news service reported.

Suleimanov is survived by his wife, Zina, and five children.

More than 90% of Dagestan's 2.6 million people are Muslim and most of the remainder are Russian Orthodox. The republic is situated in the Caucas Mountains on Russia's border with Chechnya.

The Slavic Centre for Law and Justice and the Institute of Law and Religion issued a statement calling Suleimanov a "true missionary with fervent heart and sincere faith," Compass Direct reported.

"He was a man of faith who fearlessly preached the Gospel, sharing the faith in Christ with people even in difficult circumstances," the statement read. "Since the beginning of his mission, Pastor Artur Suleimanov prayed for the salvation of Dagestan nations, despite all the difficulties and threatening that the community and preachers faced."

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Face Crises with Courage

2 Samuel 15:13 - 14, 24 - 26, 30 - 37; 19:7 - 8a

By Tony Martin

What would you be thinking and feeling if a sudden calamity forced you to leave your home? This is what David is faced with as he learns the hearts of the men of Israel are with his son, Absalom.

Continue to Trust God (2 Sam. 15:13 - 14, 24 - 26)

David fled from Jerusalem. Absalom had the whole nation following him, so David felt it necessary to leave with his family, officials, and special bodyguard. David knew that Absalom, who had killed Amnon, might also kill his brothers and possibly his father. If Absalom had had to attack Jerusalem, he could very well slaughter its inhabitants, so David was willing to risk his own life and abandon his own throne to protect its citizens.

In the midst of all this, David continued to trust God. For the second time in his life, he was forced to flee into the wilderness. Should we read any of David's exile psalms, we see that his trust in God and his conviction that God still ruled guided his every step. Read Psalm 3, 4, 41, 55, 61, 62, and 63, and we have a strong sense of where David's heart was. In 15:24 and following, we see Zadok and Abiathar taking the Ark back to Jerusalem. David didn't want the throne of God treated like a good luck charm. God's favor was on David and He would restore him to the throne. Note in v. 26 that even if God rejected David, David was willing to accept His sovereign will.

Fleeing a threatening situation may be a wise move, even if it hurts our pride. It doesn't



Martin

necessarily show a lack of faith. Standing up to fight takes courage, but backing down for the sake of others, as David did, also takes courage.

Don't Isolate Yourself from Others (2 Sam. 15:30 - 37)

A.W. Tozer said, "The Bible was written in tears, and to tears it will yield its best treasures." David weeps openly in v. 30, and he had every right to: Amnon had been murdered, Tamar violated, and Absalom was in the process of stealing the throne.

But the Lord answers David's prayer. First, David had gotten word that Ahithophel had turned against him, joining with Absalom. No doubt he felt alone. Then God answered his prayer through Hushai. In an exchange, David asked Hushai to remain in Jerusalem to help counteract Ahithophel's influence while pretending to be loyal to Absalom. Hushai is called David's friend (v. 37; 1 Chron. 27:33), which implies he

was a friend in the court, perhaps a special counselor. David sent Hushai back to Jerusalem as he had with Zadok, Abiathar, and their two sons.

God frequently works in our lives through others. We should be open to receiving the help of trustworthy people in our lives; God did not intend for us to go it alone.

Fulfill Your Responsibilities (2 Sam. 19:7 - 8a)

At this point in the narrative, David has lost his son, Absalom. (2 Sam. 18:33 is one of the most shattering accounts written anywhere dealing with a father's loss of a son, in spite of all that Absalom had done.) Despite his extraordinary loss, David continued to fulfill his duties as king. On October 10, 1950, Sir Winston Churchill told listeners at the University of Copenhagen that "I was only the servant of my country and had I, at any moment, failed to express her unflinching resolve to fight and conquer, I should at once have been rightly cast aside." This is a lesson David had to learn. Leaders must lead,

even if their hearts are broken.

So Joab tells David to go out and encourage his men, or else not one single man would be left by nightfall (v. 7). This short but blunt speech brought David back to reality, and we see David "sitting in the gateway," which shows a return to normalcy.

As harsh as it may seem, personal loss should never be used as an excuse for neglecting our responsibility to God and others. One way to cope with tragedy is to return to daily tasks at an appropriate time. David came to understand this.

Consider, in closing: How can you make strategic requests of your loyal friends when you are in need? To whom do you owe loyalty, even when he or she seems to be in trouble? And finally, how can you entrust yourself to God the next time you face a setback?

Scripture cited is from the New International Version.

Martin is the Associate Editor of The Baptist Record.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Relationships: The Improvement Factor

2 Corinthians 10:1 - 13:13

By Laura Leathers



Leathers

In our home, the senior portraits of our four children hang on the hallway wall. Under each portrait is a small framed needlework picture which displays their name, the meaning of the name, and a Scripture verse. About eleven years ago, our fourth child, Paul, was studying the meaning of his name. He was very upset when he realized his name meant "little". He thought the meaning of his name referred to being weak and lacking courage. But the opposite is true. For it is in our weaknesses He is made strong (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

As we come to the conclusion of this strong yet sharp second letter the tone shifts. Paul is preparing the Corinthians for his promised visit (1:15, 16; 2:1-3). The majority of those in the

Corinthian church had experienced an improved relationship with Paul. But here in the final chapters Paul directly refers to the minority who are still accusing him (2 Cor. 10:7, 10-12; 11:4, 20-23). Once again Paul defends his apostolic authority and his ministry as well as voicing his concern about improving relationships. He begins with the initial step which is to...

Approach Courageously 2 Cor. 10:1-3

Meekness is not weakness. It is "the humble and gentle attitude that expresses itself in patient endurance of unfair treatment (MacArthur Study Bible)." Gentle people do not seek revenge or retaliation, even though they have the power to do so. Many Corinthians looked at Paul as a weak individual and didn't

think he had the ability to stand against their accusations. In verse two Paul states, in a loving way, "Don't force me to show you how bold I can be!"

Some Corinthians were judging Paul's ministry "according to the flesh" (2 Cor. 10:2)

not "according to the Spirit." The first six verses of chapter ten deals with the spiritual warfare Paul was engaged in (see Eph. 6:12). Paul's ability to stand boldly came through the victory found only in Christ.

Challenge With God's Work 2 Cor. 10:15-18

Throughout the letters to the Corinthians Paul has dealt with various doctrine and theological issues. Now, the church crisis in Corinth has in most part been resolved. It was time to move forward—to take the gospel beyond you (vs. 16).

What are the regions beyond you where ministry needs to be expanded? "Paul suggests three questions we may ask ourselves as we seek to measure our ministries by the will of

God. They are: "Am I where God wants me to be (vv. 13-14)? Is God glorified by my ministry (vv. 15-17)? Can the Lord commend my work (v. 18)? ... The important thing is that we are where God wants us to be, doing what He wants us to do so that He might be glorified. Motive is as much a part of God's measurement of our work as is growth. If we are seeking to glorify and please God alone, and if we are not afraid of His evaluation of our hearts and lives, then we need not fear the estimates of men or their criticisms" (Wiersbe). The challenge with God's work is to bring Him glory and not seek the glory from man.

Declare Any Concerns 2 Cor. 12:14-18

Anticipating the third visit with the Corinthians, Paul wanted to address issues which might arise. Not be a burden, emphasized his continued refusal of accepting support. Another concern was for the Corinthians to understand his willingness "to be expended". Paul was willing to give of himself even if it cost him his life. Lastly, there was the issue with

those who believed Paul and his associates had taken advantage of the Corinthians regarding the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. Paul openly and honestly addressed the issues, so that upon his arrival, there would be no hindrances to their relationship.

Seek to Strengthen 2 Cor. 12:19-21

As we come to the conclusion of our passage Paul expresses his motive was not selfishness, but love. Paul was afraid that when he arrived in Corinth he would find them still practicing the sins he listed (vs. 20) and this would cause him to be humiliated and saddened. His intentions were to strengthen the church and see them mature spiritually. Improvement in relationships will occur when we seek to strengthen others and to do so for the Glory of God.

It has been a privilege to serve you through this endeavor. Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and reader feedback. Soli deo Gloria!

Leathers is a member of First Church, Durant.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.



Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

MAY, 2010

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'Big Day' coming Oct. 3 for evangelism preparation

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Southern Baptist churches have an opportunity to set aside one "Big Day" this fall to focus on the importance of every individual being prepared to share their faith.

Also known as Soul-Winning Commitment Day, the event can be customized with a variety of training opportunities, sermon ideas and other tools to reflect the needs of individual churches, according to Dick Church, church evangelism and resource coordinator for the North American Mission Board (NAMB) personal evangelism team.

The mission board sponsors the annual emphasis, which has a suggested date this year of Oct. 3.

The goal of Soul Winning Commitment Day is to encourage pastors and church leaders to dedicate one day of the year to motivate, inspire and challenge church members to make a commitment to reach beyond the walls of the church and engage in some form of evangelism," Church said.

For some, he said, that might mean committing to take a course on how to share their faith. For others, it

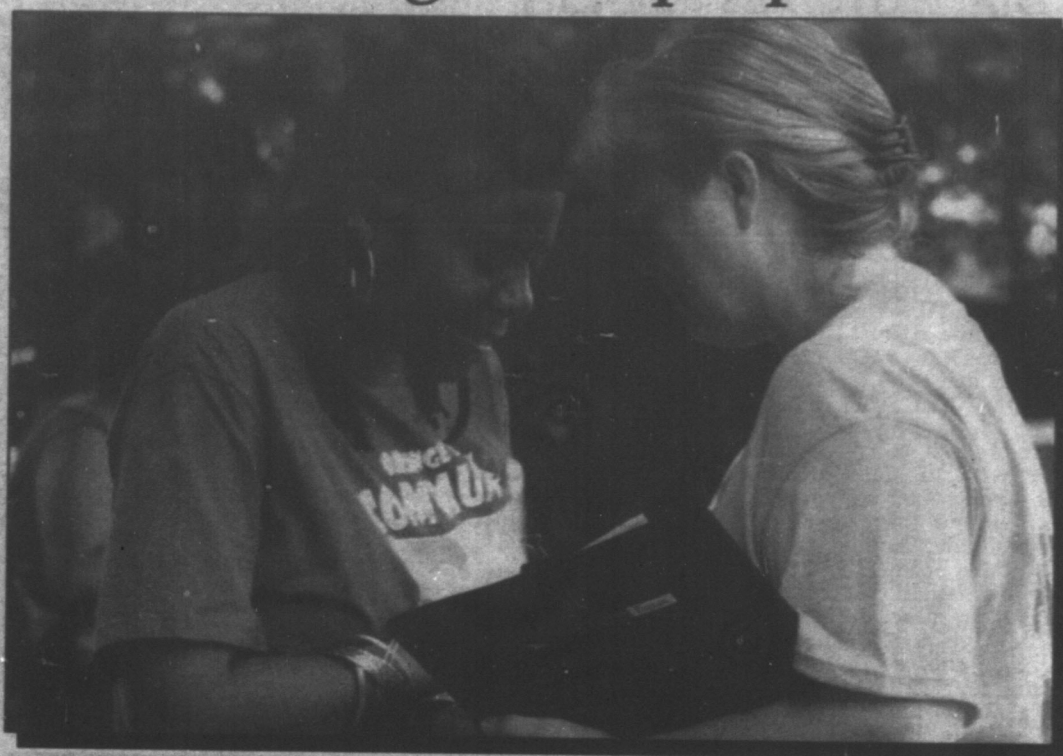
might be a commitment to participating in visitation or outreach events. Others might simply commit to looking for opportunities to share their testimony of how Christ has changed their life.

The theme this year is Every Believer Sharing, which ties into Southern Baptists' 10-year God's Plan for Sharing (GPS) initiative launched this year, Church said. A key GPS goal is to equip every believer to share the Gospel, he said.

Resources for the Big Day include a comprehensive planning guide that can provide either a full turn-key plan for churches to implement or a set of tools to customize their own emphasis.

Some churches have chosen to utilize the One Hour Witnessing Workshop during their Sunday morning worship service, for instance, while some pastors might craft a sermon using points from a sermon outline and offer opportunities to make a commitment.

Among other resources are Sunday School/small group lessons and drama scripts. All resources can be downloaded free at www.thebigday.org.



BIG DAY — Equipping every believer to share their faith in Christ is the focus of Soul-Winning Commitment Day, which has a suggested date this year of Oct. 3. Details about how a church can customize its own Big Day are available at www.thebigday.org. (BP photo)

Meeting shapes future missions strategy of 'internationalization'

PRAGUE (BP) — "We thought this would take years to develop, this concept of the internationalization of missions," said Gordon Fort, vice president of the International Mission Board (IMB) office of global strategy, but it's appar-

ent "that God has already been doing stuff that we had no idea about," Fort said, "and we're just beginning to get in on it."

Fort spoke of the internationalization of missions — Christians all over the globe

sending their own missionaries into other countries to share the Gospel — at the European National Partners in Mission Sending Consultation in Prague, Czech Republic, earlier this summer.

IMB leaders joined mission-

ary-sending organizations from Romania, Germany, and Panama. Also participating in the discussions on global evangelization were representatives from the College of Theology and Education in Moldova and Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.

During the conference, leaders forged partnerships and shared their struggles and victories in sending cross-cultural missionaries — people from all nations, to all nations, to share Christ.

Those from Central and Eastern Europe spoke about their struggles with churches that still operate under a communist-era mentality. Some shared stories of traveling to more than 300 churches, urging pastors to embrace a focus on missions. Others emphasized the urgency of sending missionaries to unreached people groups in Central and South Asia. The leaders shared ideas and needs, pinpointing ways they could assist each other.

"When I see the pictures and I hear the testimonies, I know that we are sharing lots of things, even though we are so far [away from one another] and have different contexts," said Carlos Gomez, leader of PAAM, a

Panamanian missions organization. "We have the same challenges. We find problems with money issues [and] churches with no missionary culture, but overall the main challenge we have is to go back to the Word of God. What were we created for?"

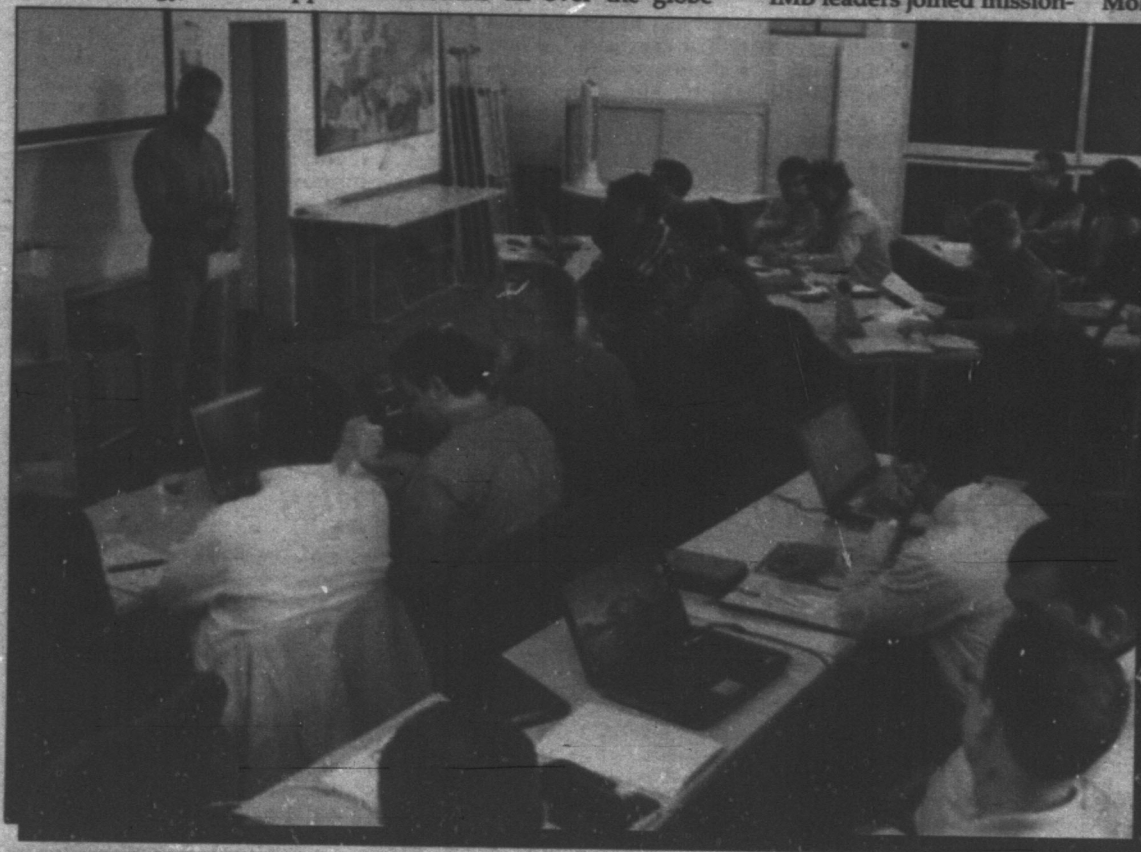
While these international missionary-sending organizations are growing, sending dozens of cross-cultural missionaries annually, they are still relatively young. Throughout the meeting, the 164-year-old IMB provided insight on evangelical strategy, missionary training and equipping.

"This might be the greatest contribution the IMB can make to global evangelization, more than anything we've ever done," Fort said.

IMB strategist Scott Holste shared research showing missions leaders the urgency of sending missionaries to countries without any evangelical presence.

"If you take all the missionaries in the world ... only three out of 100 are working with these least reached people groups of the world... so we've got to partner together," Holste said. "We've got to get the whole church involved."

Fort added, "We have sensed that God is really stirring the church locally in this generation. And we have felt that perhaps the greatest contribution we can make to global evangelization is making it possible for those last peoples who have not heard."



DISCUSSING THE FUTURE — Mark Edworthy, strategist for the International Mission Board's European Peoples Affinity Group, addresses a meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, in which Baptists from several countries explored the internationalization of missions. (BP photo)